

BATCOMBE PARISH COUNCIL

Clerk: Rob Sage

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Minutes of the Monthly Meeting of Batcombe Parish Council held on Wednesday 1st October 2014 in the Old School, Batcombe, commencing at 8.00pm.

Present - Councillors: Chris Wildridge – Chairman, Liz Hollis, Ian Sage, John Sommer and Justin Witcombe.

Also Present: The Clerk – Rob Sage, and three members of the public.

3764 – Apologies for Absence: Jayne Cox, who was unwell, and the District and County Councillors.

3765 – Declarations of Interest: Ian Sage declared an interest in item 3779, payments to the Clerk, as the Clerk's brother.

3766 – Public Participation: None.

3767 – Minutes of the Meeting held on Wednesday 3rd September 2014 were approved and signed by the Chairman.

3768 – Matters Arising: None.

3769 – District and County Councillors' Reports: There were no reports.

3770 – Allotments: The Clerk reported that one person had come forward wanting an allotment. As two existing allotment holders had been cultivating the vacant allotment (without informing the Parish Council) it was decided to allow them continued use of the allotment until the end of February to harvest any winter crops they may have planted. The allotment would then be allocated to the applicant who did not have an allotment from March 1st at half the usual rent for the remainder of the year. It was also agreed that the allotments should be advertised twice a year in March and September, and those holding more than one allotment would be reminded that they would have to give up their additional allotment or half allotment after 12 months' notice if anyone without an allotment came forward wanting one.

3771 – Footpaths and Highways: A local farmer expressed concerns that an article in the parish magazine had encourage people to exercise their dogs in fields rather than on the roads. He noted that people needed the landowner's permission to walk on land other than designated footpaths and that free roaming dogs were a danger to farm animals. It was agreed to ask Jayne Cox as the Parish Paths Liaison Officer to write an article for the magazine asking walkers to keep to footpaths and keep their dogs under control.

The Chairman and the Clerk had met with Robert Davey from the County Council's Traffic Management department to consider placing "No HGV" signs on the roads into Batcombe. It had been proposed to place the signs after the last working farms on the roads from Higher Alham and past Batcombe Lodge to allow continued HGV access to the farms, but the owners of the farms had been concerned about HGVs attempting to turn in their drives and so alternative positions for the signs would be considered at a further meeting with Robert Davey.

The Clerk reported that a resident had expressed concern about the state of Walter's Hill, which made it difficult to walk up. The Clerk to report the concern to Somerset Highways.

Car Parking: In the absence of Jayne Cox, it was agreed to defer this item to the next meeting.

3772 – Planning Applications: Planning Application No: 2014/1798/PAH – Single storey flat roof extension to the rear elevation. 6 Kale Street, Batcombe – Prior Approval Householder. This was the first application under new legislation that allowed householders to add large extensions to their home without obtaining planning permission. However, the Clerk noted that the scheme did not apply to houses within the Conservation Area and so planning permission would be required for the proposed extension.

Planning Application Updates: Planning permission had been granted for the cheese cave at Westcombe Dairy (on condition that it was only used for the manufacture and storage of food products including cheese) and for the revised alterations at Ivy Wall House.

The application to convert the stables at Crows Hill to a dwelling had been refused on the grounds that the domestication of the site would seriously harm the landscape character and visual amenity of the area and that the development was outside the development limits of any settlement and thus unsustainable.

The applications to prune an oak tree at The Barn and for an extension to the garden room at Myrtle Cottage in Westcombe had both been withdrawn, according to information on the District Council website, although the Parish Council had not been informed directly.

An appeal had been made against the decision to refuse permission for the two storey extension at Cherry Tree Cottage. As this was a householder application, there was no opportunity for a further statement, but the original comments made on the application by the Parish Council would be passed onto the Planning Inspector.

The Clerk reported that the application for change of use of the barn on Bailey's Lane from an agricultural building to a dwelling house was being considered for prior approval as permitted development under new legislation that had come into force this year. As such the Parish Council would not be consulted on the application.

3773 – Playing Field – Maintenance Report: The Clerk reported that there were more molehills in the Playing Field. It was decided to defer getting the molecatcher back for a month. The Clerk also reported that there were signs of a badger rooting in a corner of the Playing Field. It was agreed to place low barriers in the gaps in the Playing Field fence to try to deter the badger. Notices would be placed regarding the barriers if they were removed. Justin Witcombe volunteered to place the barriers and Ian Sage offered suitable grills. The Clerk noted that the picnic table was unsafe and needed to be removed. Justin volunteered to do this the next day. The Clerk to place a note in the parish magazine stating the table had been removed for safety reasons. John Sommer noted that the pedestrian gate to the Playing Field was frequently left open and needed to be made self-closing.

3774 – Coney Wood – an update from the Working Party: The Chairman reported that the public meeting to consider the possible lease of Coney Wood would be held on Saturday 8th November at 3.00pm. He hoped that a Working Party similar to Keep on the Grass would be set up to oversee fundraising for and maintenance of the Wood.

3775 – Emergency Plan – an update from the Working Party: The Chairman reported that along with Griff Williams and Bruno Cristofoli from the Village Hall Trust he had had a meeting with the Parochial Church Council (PCC). He hoped to develop the Plan to consider

minor emergencies such as extended power cuts, flooding and snow, and consider who in the parish needed help. A working party of himself, the Clerk, Arish Turle from the PCC and Nick Sommer would be meeting the following Monday to consider the Plan.

3776 – Review of Complaints Procedure: The Code of Practice for Handling Complaints had been adopted by the Parish Council in September 2003 and amended in July 2011, to clarify the fact that the Code of Practice dealt with complaints against the Council as a body, rather than complaints against individual Councillors that would be dealt with under the Code of Conduct. The Code of Practice was in line with that recommended by SALC and no amendments were felt to be needed.

3777 – Review of Policies on the Freedom of Information and Data Protection: A Model Publication Scheme prepared by the Information Commissioner had been adopted by the Parish Council in 2008. The Scheme committed the Parish Council to publishing information about itself including a “Guide to Information Available from the Parish Council” listing the information available and how it may be obtained. This Guide was updated in December 2012 to take into account the fact that the Council had a website on which to publish the information it is required to provide. The Guide would be updated as more of the required information was published on the website, but had not been a priority in developing the website. The Clerk reported that the Parish Council had only ever had one request for information under the Freedom of Information Act, which suggested that the website was providing sufficient information for most people.

The Clerk reported that under the 1998 Data Protection Act every organisation which processed personal data needed to register with the Information Commissioner’s Office (ICO), unless exempt, at a cost of £35 a year. The Clerk had checked with the ICO and confirmed that the Parish Council now needed to register, and this was agreed. The Clerk also noted that the Parish Council was required to deal with any personal data according to the eight principles of data protection. These were that data i) must be processed honestly (i.e. people are told why the information is wanted); ii) must be obtained only for lawful purposes; iii) must be relevant for these purposes; iv) must be accurate and up to date; v) must not be kept longer than necessary; vi) must be processed in accordance with the rights of the data subjects (i.e. anyone who asks has to be told what data on them is held); vii) must be kept secure; and viii) must not be transferred outside the European Economic Area.

3778 – Bank Reconciliation and Budget Update: The Parish Council’s new Financial Regulations required that a bank reconciliation be verified by a Councillor other than the Chairman once a quarter and reported to the Council. Liz Hollis was appointed to verify the bank reconciliation produced by the Clerk, which she did at the meeting and this was then reported to the Council.

The Financial Regulations also required the Clerk to produce a budget update once a quarter and explain any material variations. A statement of receipts and payments comparing the budget for the current year with a project based on receipts and payment to date had been distributed with the Agendas. The Clerk noted that the material variations were that the new vehicle gate for the Playing Field was not included in the budget (as at the time of setting the budget it had been anticipated that it would have been paid for in the previous year); that the water supply would be over budget as there would be three bills in the current year, there only having been one bill the previous year; and that the change in the Clerk’s tax code meant that no PAYE would be paid.

3779 - Authorisation of payment: Councillors authorised the following payments:

£96.00 Gardens of Avalon – Grass cutting for September.

£1,071.20 The Clerk – Salary for 2nd Quarter plus the extra hour a week for 1st Quarter.

£155.09 The Clerk – Expenses for 2nd Quarter.

Councillors also authorised the payment of £35 to register under the Data Protection Act.

3780 – Other Business - matters of information only: None.

3781 – Date and Time of Next Meeting: Wednesday 5th November 2014 at 7.30pm in the Old School, Batcombe.

Chris Wilddridge
5th November 2014